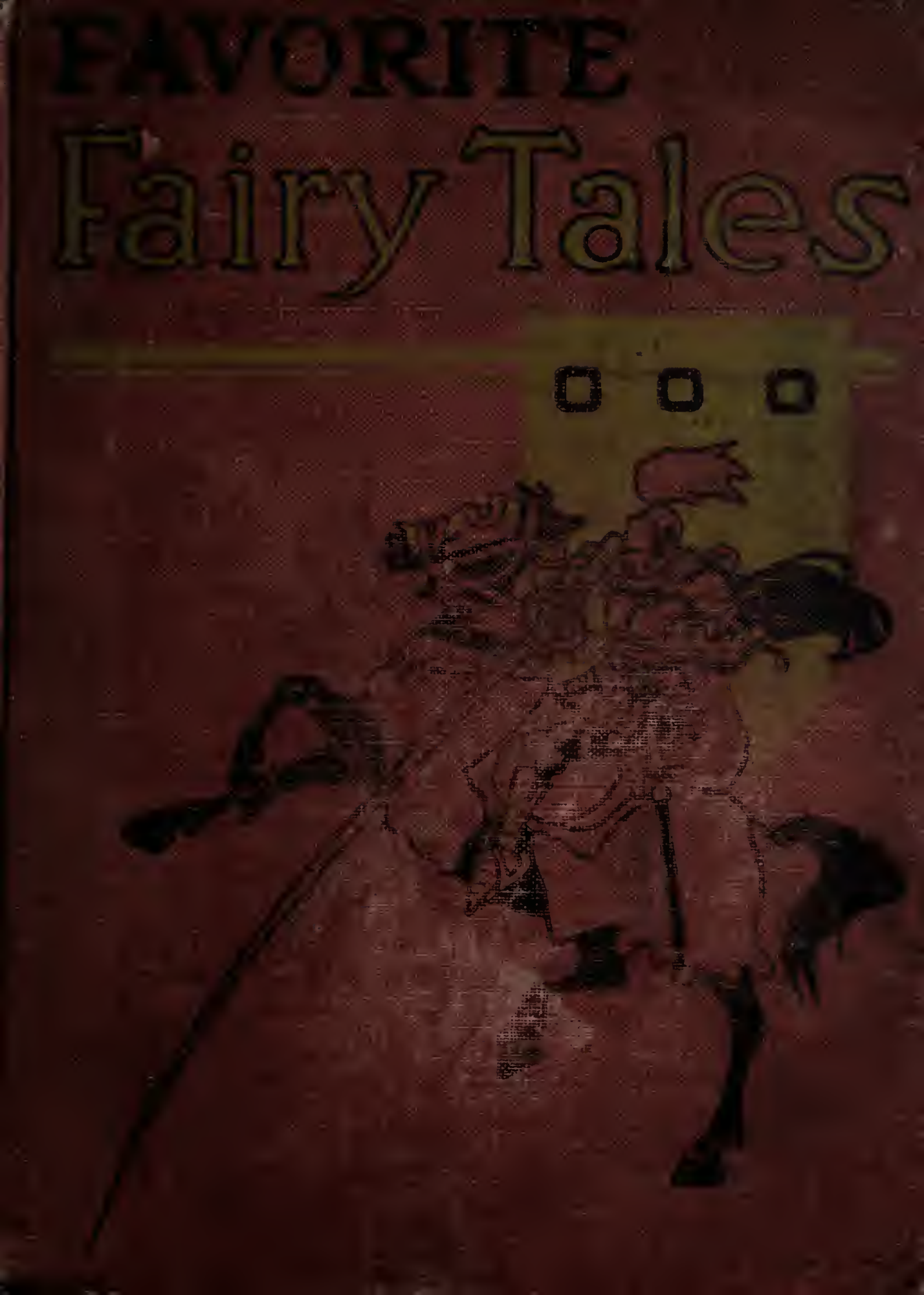
FAVORITE Fairy Tales



BIG BOOK OF FAIRY TALES

ILLUSTRATED

BY

GUSTAVE DORÉ
AND OTHER ARTISTS

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THE UGLY DUCKLING.

In a sunny spot stood an old country-house, encircled by canals. Between the wak and the water's edge there grew huge burdock leaves, that had shot up to such a height that a little child might have stood upright under the tallest of them; and this spot was as wild as though it had been situated in the depths of a wood. In this snug retirement a duck was setting on her

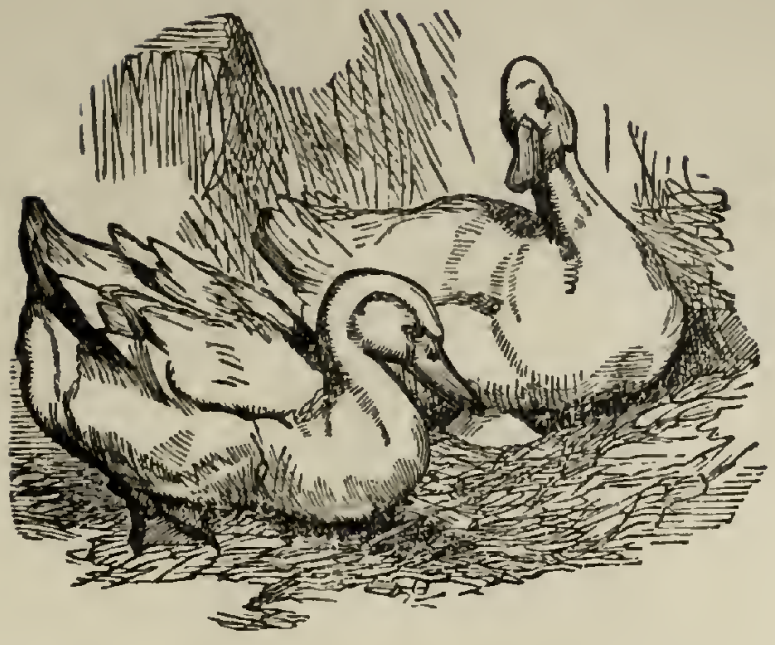
nest to hatch her young; but she began to think it a wearisome task as the little ones seemed very backward in making their appearance: besides, she had few visitors; for the other ducks preferred swimming about in the canals, instead of being at the trouble of climbing up the slope, and then sitting under a burdock leaf to gossip with her.



At length one egg cracked, and then another. "Peep! peep!" cried they, as each yolk became a live thing, and popped out its head.

"Quack! quack!" said the mother, and they tried to cackle like her, while they looked all about them under the green leaves; and she allowed them to look to their heart's content, because green is good for the eyes.

"How large the world is, to be sure!" said the young ones. And truly enough, they had rather more room than when they were still in the egg-shell.



"Do you fancy this is the whole world?" cried the mother. "Why, it reaches far away beyond the other side of the garden, down to the parson's field; though I never went to such a distance as that!" But are you all there?" continued she, rising. "No, faith! you are not; for there still lies the largest egg. I wonder how long this business is to last—I really begin to grow quite tired of it!" And she sat down once more.

"Well, how are you getting on?" inquired an old duck, who came to pay her a visit.

"This egg takes a deal of hatching," answered the sitting duck, "it won't break; but just look at the others, are they not the prettiest ducklings ever seen? They are the image of their father, who, by-the-bye, does not trouble himself to come and see me."

"Let me look at the egg that won't break," quoth the old



duck. "Take my word for it, it must be a guinea-fowl's egg I was once deceived in the same way, and I bestowed a deal of care and anxiety on the youngsters, for they are afraid of water. I could not make them take to it. I stormed and raved, but it was of no use. Let's see the egg. Sure enough, it is a guinea-fowl's egg. Leave it alone, and set about teaching the other children to swim."

"I'll just sit upon it a bit longer," said the duck; "for since I have sat so long, a few days more won't make much odds."

"Please yourself," said the old duck, as she went away.

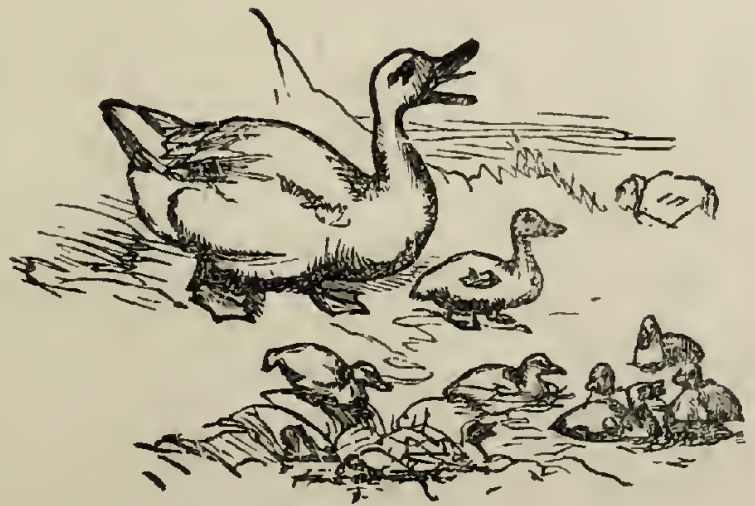
At length the large egg cracked. "Peep! peep!" squeaked the youngster, as he crept out. How big and ugly he was to be sure! The duck looked at him, saying, "Really this is a most enormous duckling! None of the others are like him. I wonder whether he is a guinea-chick after all? Well, we shall soon see

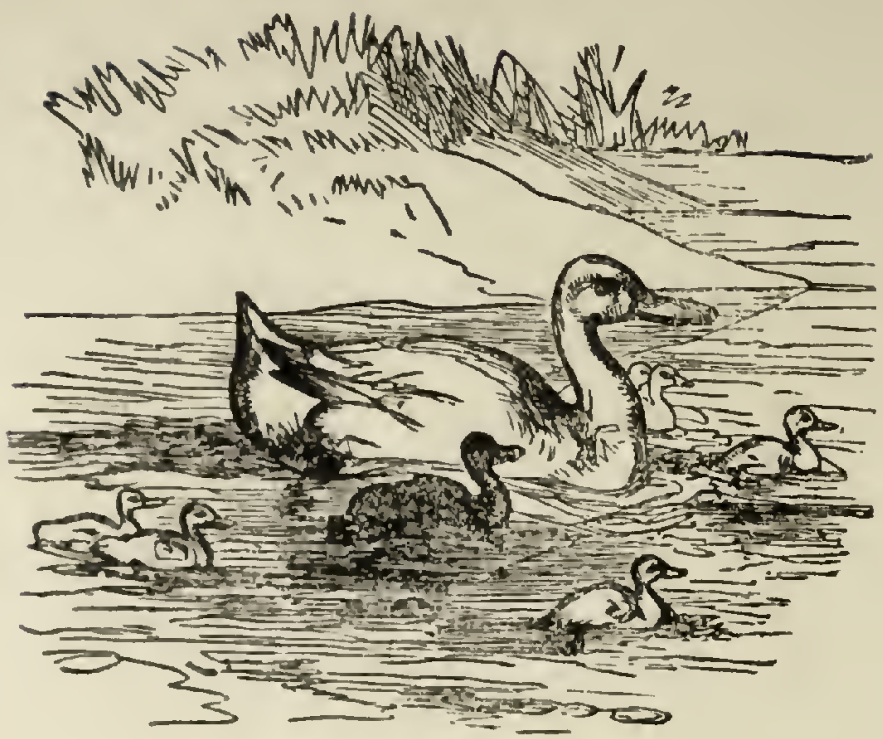
when we go down to the water; for in he shall go, though I push him in myself."

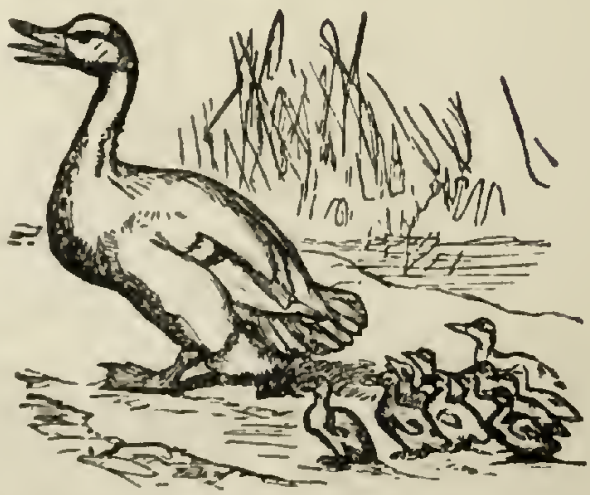
On the following morning the weather was most delightful,



and the sun was shining brightly on the green burdock leaves. The mother duck took her young brood down to the canal. Splash into the water she went. "Quack! quack!" cried she, and forthwith one duckling after another jumped in. The water closed over their heads for a moment; but they soon rose to the surface again, and swam about so nicely, just as if their legs paddled them about of their own accord; and they had all taken to the water; even the ugly, gray-coated youngster swam about with the rest.







"Nay, he is no guinea-chick," said she, "only look how capitally he uses his legs, and how steady he keeps himself; he's every inch my own child! And really he's very pretty when one comes to look at him attentively. Quack! quack!" added she, "now come along and I'll take you into high society, and introduce you to the duck-yard, but mind you keep



close to me, that nobody may tread upon you; and, above all, beware of the cat."

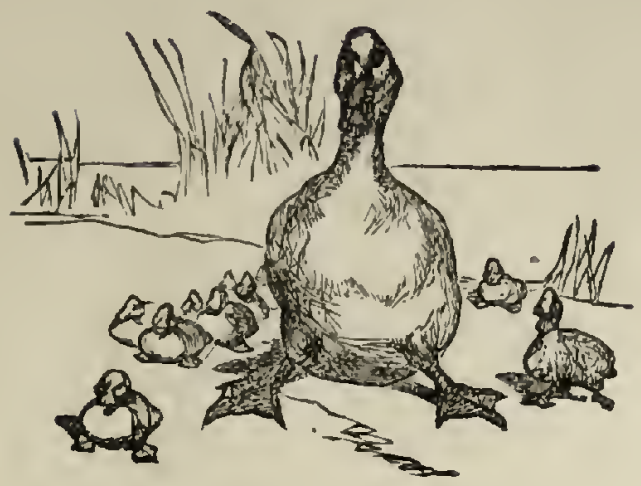
They now reached the farm-yard, where there was a great hubbub. Two families were fighting for an eel's head, which, in the end, was carried off by the cat.

"See, children, that's the way with the world!" remarked the mother of the ducklings, licking her beak, for she would have been very glad to have had the eel's head for herself. "Now, move on!" said she, "and mind you cackle properly, and bow your head before that old duck yonder; she is the noblest born of them all, and is of Spanish descent, and that's why she is





so dignified; and look! she has a red rag tied to her leg, which is the greatest mark of distinction that can be bestowed upon a duck, as it shows an anxiety not to lose her, and that she should be recognized by both man and beast. Now cackle—and don't turn in your toes; a well-bred duckling spreads his feet wide apart, like papa and mamma, in this sort of way. Now bend your neck, and say, 'Quack!'"



The ducklings did as they were bid; but the other ducks, after looking at them, only said aloud: "Now look! there comes another set, as if we were not numerous enough already. And bless me! what a queer-looking chap one of the ducklings is to be sure—we can't put up with him!" And one of the throng darted forward, and bit him in the neck.

"Leave him alone," said the mother, "he did no harm to any one."

"No; but he is too big and uncouth," said the biting duck. "and therefore he wants a thrashing."

"Mamma has a sweet little family," said the old duck, with the red rag about her leg; "they are all pretty except one, who is rather ill-favored. I wish mamma could polish him a bit."

"I'm afraid that will be impossible, your grace," said the mother of the ducklings. "It's true, he is not pretty, but he has a very good disposition, and swims as well, or perhaps better than all the others put together. However, he may grow prettier, and perhaps become smaller; he remained too long in

the egg-shell, and therefore his figure is not properly formed." And with this she smoothed down the ruffled feathers of his neck, adding, "At all events, as he is a male duck, it won't matter so much. I think he'll prove strong, and be able to fight his way through the world."

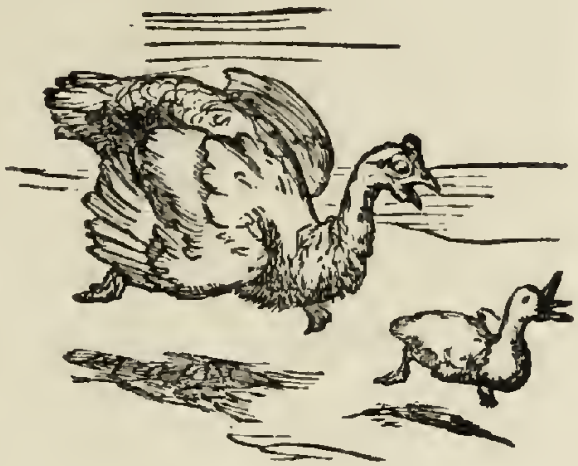
"The other ducklings are elegant little creatures," said the old duck. "Now, make yourself at home; and if you should happen to find an eel's head, you can bring it to me."

And so the family made themselves comfortable.

But the poor duckling who had been the last to creep out of his egg-shell, and looked so ugly, was bitten, pushed about, and made game of, not only by the ducks, but by the hens. They all declared he was much to big; and a guinea-fowl who fancied himself at least an emperor, because he had come into the world with spurs, now puffed himself up like a vessel in full sail and flew at the Duckling, and blustered till his head turned completely red, so that the poor little thing did not know where he could walk or stand, and was quite grieved at being so ugly that the whole farm-yard scouted him.



Nor did matters mend the next day, or the following ones, but rather grew worse and worse. The poor Duckling was hunted down by everybody. Even his sisters were so unkind to him, that they were continually saying, "I wish the cat would run away with you, you ugly creature!" while his mother added, "I wish you had never been born!" And the ducks pecked at him, the



hens struck him, and the girl who fed the poultry used to kick him.

So he ran away, and flew over the palings. The little birds in the bushes were startled, and took wing. "That is because I am so ugly," thought the Duckling, as he closed his eyes in despair, but presently he roused up again, and ran on further till he came to a large marsh inhabited by wild ducks. Here he spent the whole night—and tired and sorrowful enough he was.

On the following morning, when the wild ducks rose and saw